

## Some Ranchers So Irritable They Object To Seeing Wells Dried Up

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Page 6

MERTZON — When the men of this land of run-over boots and unfilled dreams began to infiltrate the leadership of the various state livestock associations, a minor prophet with a lifetime batting average of .150 could have foretold that trouble would be the end result.

First evidence that this would be true came when a purebred son of the short grass country was elected president of the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers. It seemed he had barely got his hands on the gavel until he was up in Washington, blabbing all around town about what a disgrace was the Interior Department's indifference to predatory animal control.

As a matter of fact, the newly inaugurated association president did so much raring and snorting in regard to the Department's policy — which could well be the biggest boon in history to the repopulating of prairie lands with wild, interesting beasts and birds of prey — that there probably are still a number of Washingtonians who think a sheep and goat operation can't function amid shadows of gliding eagles and prides of hungry cats.

In the cabinet of this association president's cabinet was another prodigy of this area which the Indians called The Land of the Fake Spring. This chap was chosen to head the Water Committee.

Now, this hombre didn't waste any time displaying the well known temperamental personality of the short grasser. In a matter of days, he had launched an attack against the oil companies' policy of using fresh water instead of salt water for secondary recovery practices. The vehemence of his campaign would have made Jack Dempsey wonder why anybody ever called him tough.

In the excitement of his action he completely ignored the fact that the water table in the short grass country has been weak for at least 50 years; that the few spring-fed waterholes which were purportedly drying up due to water flooding of oil fields were never any great shakes as bodies of water when compared to the Minnesota lake region and that the oldtimers made thousands of dollars off cattle when there wasn't a single watering to the average 20-section block.

In his fury he also skipped admitting that the odds on all the wells in the state going dry were quoted at the enticing figure of even money. Nor did he let on that he knows sheep and goats don't need a drink of water every day except during the warm months from May through mid-October.

Instead, of all things to get upset about, he chose to become disturbed when a politician stated in a newspaper interview that the policy of allowing oil producers to use a few million barrels of fresh water would be continued as long as it didn't endanger the drinking water supply of cities.

Immediately our short grass leader construed this to mean that the commission in charge of regulating the state's oil industry didn't give a hang if our livestock had to start living like camels, or if the old cows and sheep had to walk to the Rio Grande for a drink. After thinking this over for a few days, the problem was magnified until, in his eyes, it was catastrophic. He unleashed his wrath by mail and wire. Undoubtedly, Alexander G. Bell and whoever invented the postage stamp had no idea their systems would ever carry such bristling language.

It is almost unbelievable that anyone who had lived all his life on the brink of being out of grass or in the commonplace position of being out of grass and also out of money, could become so excited over a threatened minor inconvenience such as being without water. However, this short grasser's deep instilled love of battle ruled out all reason. And to this very day he is thrashing and bellowing something awful, trying to convince the rest of us that all the citizens of this dry range country should be as interested as he in halting the depletion of underground water.

What's done is done, but there's no way of covering up all the row these two short grass belligerents have stirred up. At least they could have shown us neighbors the courtesy of waiting until after the lambing and kidding season to talk about predatory animals. I can name a number of citizens who would have appreciated their mentioning the water problem a year ago instead of now when everybody's worried sick over having to deepen their wells.

But as it has always been and probably always will be, we short grassers just can't live in peace.